

NOTES

Stop and Search Independent Scrutiny Panel

1 October 2018 17.30 – 19.00

1. [a] In Attendance

Members: Carolyn Mercer [Chair] plus five members

Also in attendance: Police

1. [b] Apologies for absence

Members: Four members offered formal apologies

2. Purpose of meeting

Carolyn outlined the purpose of the meeting, i.e. to consider future methods of working, suggestions of which had been circulated in advance. Before considering the detailed suggestions tabled and the two sets of comments submitted, she identified three possibly conflicting strands by referencing previous work of the Panel, recent meetings, including the involvement of the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, and targets for the future.

3. Background

Following Dip Samplings [involving small samples] which had produced a high proportion of issues to question, an analysis of every Stop and Search event over a full Quarter was undertaken. This involved 523 events which resulted in 129 queries in our first tranche. This 25% query rate reinforced the Panel's view that there was a key issue regarding recording and reporting. It was emphasized by Carolyn that every single query we had identified in the past had been resolved by clarification of the grounds. The issue relating to scrutiny and validation appeared to be that of recording not of legitimacy of Stop and Search grounds.

The scale of the number of queries being passed through the normal channels to individual officers was felt likely to be counterproductive to enhancing the use of Stop and Search. A decision was taken by Senior Officers not to pass this raw data on or to investigate it further. Instead, it was thought that consideration by the Panel needed to be given to how further improvements in the quality of Stop and Search and information about them could be secured.

4. Key issues for the Panel

- Ensure that Stop and Search is used legally in Lancashire by doing quality analysis of records;
- Contribute to further improvements in the application of Stop and Search;

BUT

- Avoid deterring legal and appropriate searches taking place by conveying an impression that the Independent Scrutiny process is being used as a 'stick to beat' the Police when they use this powerful and legitimate tool for crime determent and successful investigation.

The discussion was wide-ranging with everyone contributing.

Concern was expressed that most of the queries which the Panel had raised had already been Quality Assessed and Approved by the supervising superior officer. This, the Panel believed, was unacceptable and improvement at this level would provide significantly beneficial learning for individual officers in a less-threatening, supportive, normal management environment.

Consideration was given to the suggestions of one member [more frequent sampling – monthly?] and a second [dip sampling on a targeted matrix approach], as well as those circulated by Carolyn, together with the thoughts of the OPCC and Police regarding data and information which can now be made available.

The use of local panels was discussed and concern was expressed at a number of levels, e.g. lack of coherence and communication with the main Scrutiny Panel. However, local knowledge and involvement had clear benefit. It was also suggested that volunteers in other areas of the Constabulary's work [already vetted] could be used as extra pairs of eyes. No firm conclusions were reached.

Because of improvements in the media to the training for Officers, a short video could be included from the Panel so all Officers could see it. This was felt useful.

5. Conclusions

It was felt essential that the scrutiny which the Panel provided was rigorous and we must not shirk that responsibility to our community.

The method of interrogating the information available was not decided upon but those present concluded that rigorous scrutiny was manageable within the Panel's resources.

It was important to restart the process of interrogating individual Stop and Search events as soon as practicable.

It was felt strongly that the reporting back of queries should be to the Supervising Officer and, where appropriate, that Supervising Officer be asked to respond directly – possibly in person – to the Panel.

6. Actions

To communicate the Notes of the meeting to all members of the Panel and to the OPCC and Police: CAROLYN [ASAP]

To discuss with Lancashire Constabulary [Damian, Danielle, Rob] when data/information could be available for scrutiny by the Panel: CAROLYN [ASAP]

To arrange a Doodle Poll to ascertain the best time/date for a meeting within the next month: CAROLYN [ASAP]

To ask Panel Members whether they would be content with their participation on the Panel circulated on the internet: CAROLYN [email or at next meeting]

7. Next Meeting

TBC